EPIC COMICS
THE SISTERHOOD OF STEEL
SISTERHOOD OF STEEL 4
JUNE 1985
$1.50
$1.75 CANADA
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WELCOME TO THE ANCIENT CITY OF PHYRUS! DON'T LET THIS SIMPLE PEASANT GARB FOOL YOU, I'M REALLY ***ARCHIE GOODWIN***, EDITOR OF MARVEL'S ***EPIC COMICS*** LINE. I WANTED TO WARN YOU BEFORE YOU RUSH INSIDE THAT THINGS MAY GET A LITTLE ***ROUGH*** THIS ISSUE. BORONWË AND HER SWORDMATES IN THE ***SISTERHOOD OF STEEL*** HAVE BEEN GIVEN AN EVENING OFF. REST ASSURED THAT MARATHON ROISTERING AND WILD ADVENTURES WILL FOLLOW. SPEAKING OF WILD ADVENTURES, IF YOU ENJOY THOSE IN ***SISTERHOOD***, YOU'LL PROBABLY ALSO LIKE THE FANTASTIC GOINGS-ON IN OUR ***OTHER*** EPIC TITLES SUCH AS ***DREADSTAR***, ***ALIEN LEGION***, ***COYOTE***, AND ***STARSTRUCK***. BUT FOR NOW, LET'S HIT THE BARS AND GAMBLING DENS OF THIS DELIGHTFUL OLD PORT. AND DON'T WORRY, NO MATTER HOW CRAZY THINGS GET, JUST STAY RIGHT ***BEHIND*** ME AND YOU COULDN'T BE SAFER!

SISTERHOOD OF STEEL™ Vol. 1, No. 4, June, 1985. Published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President; Stan Lee, Publisher; Michael Hobson, Group Vice-President; Milton Schiffman, Vice-President, Production. Office of Publication: 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016. Published bi-monthly. SISTERHOOD OF STEEL™ (including all prominent characters featured in this issue) and the distinctive likenesses thereof are the trademarks of Christy Marx and Mike Vosburg. "Epic Comics" is a registered trademark of the Marvel Comics Group, a division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All SISTERHOOD OF STEEL™ material copyright ©1985 Christy Marx and Mike Vosburg. All other material © 1985 Marvel Comics Group. All rights reserved. Price $1.50 per copy in the US and $1.75 in Canada. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons and / or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the condition that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. Printed in Canada.

A SHIP OF THE SISTERHOOD HAS ARRIVED AND DOCKED ON THE PHYRUS SIDE OF THE TWIN CITIES, ORANGE-PHYRUS.
NORMALLY, THIS IS A COMMON EVENT, NOTHING TO AROUSE SPECIAL INTEREST OR STOP TRAFFIC.
BUT TODAY THE SISTERHOOD IS BRINGING HOME ITS DEAD.
A WAVE OF SILENCE RUNS UP THE STREET. TALK FALTERS AND DIES. HEADS TURN. THE SHROUDED BODIES PASS AND IN THEIR GRIM WAKE WHISPERED QUESTIONS RISE--"HOW? WHY?"
THEN NEW WHISPERS ANSWER, "THE SLAYERS OF GIAOUR DID THIS. THEY ATTACKED A SHIP OF CADETS, MERE GIRLS WHO HAD NEVER BEEN IN BATTLE!"

"WHAT OF IT?" OTHERS SAY, "THEY'RE SISTERS. IT'S NOT THE FIRST TIME THEY'VE CARTED THEIR DEAD UP THIS STREET.
AND IT WON'T BE THE LAST!"
INSIDE THE FORTRESS, COMMANDER GILL ADDRESSES THE SURVIVING CADETS.
WE MUST ALL FACE OUR FIRST BATTLE AND CONQUER OUR FEARS AT A TIME THAT IS DETERMINED FOR US.
UNDER THE MOST DIFFICULT OF HARDSHIPS, WITH NO WARNING, WITH NO FAIR CRY TO BATTLE, YOU FACED OUR FIERCEST ENEMIES...AND YOU CONQUERED!
BECAUSE OF YOUR COURAGE, YOUR VALOR, YOUR SELFLESS DUTY TO THE SISTERHOOD, I WAIVE YOUR TESTING AS CADETS AND AWARD YOU FULL WARRIOR STATUS FROM THIS DAY FORWARD!
THE GODDESS BE WITH YOU!
SISTERHOOD!

THEY RAISE THEIR VOICES AND OVER-COME GRIEF WITH FIERCE EXULTATION.
KNIVES BEAT UPON SHIELDS!
SWORD CLANGS AGAINST SWORD!
INSIDE, THEIR CLAMOR SHAKES THE STONES!
OUTSIDE...IT'S BUSINESS AS USUAL.
ALRIGHT, QUIET DOWN! FOR THOSE WHO DON'T KNOW, I'M COMMANDER GLESPA AND I RUN THIS PLACE!
AFTER DISMISSAL, YOU MAY COLLECT YOUR DUTY PAY AND A BONUS FOR BATTLE SERVICE, THEN YOU HAVE FULL LIBERTY UNTIL HIGH BELLS TOMORROW!
THERE ARE GIAOURANS IN ORANGE, SO STAY IN PHYRUS AND OUT OF TROUBLE!
THERE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A CADET ON BOARD NAMED BORONWË. DID SHE MAKE IT?
FULL WARRIOR STATUS? THAT MEANS FULL WARRIOR PAY!
BORONWË?
WHAT?!
DID SHE SAY MY NAME? I COULD SWEAR...
HEY, BORONWË!
Uh, I'D SAY THAT'S HER.
STILL TRYING TO BREAK MY BACK, eh?
YOU LUCKY SHORTASS! WISH THEY'D STUCK ME ON THAT BOAT!
TELL ME EVERYTHING! HOW MANY DID YOU KILL? 5? 6?
IT WASN'T WHAT YOU THINK, MAYAL.
Hmmm... WONDER WHAT SHE'S DONE TO GET ON THE WRONG SIDE OF VANDALIS?
SHE'S WATCHING ME! WHAT THE HELL HAVE I DONE NOW?

PAYMASTER
WA-HA! WE'RE RICH!
DO YOU WISH TO LEAVE SOME ON ACCOUNT?
YES, PLEASE. HALF!
YOU SHOULD SAVE SOME, DINDRA!
NOT A CHANCE! I'M OUT FOR A GOOD TIME! FIRST, THE DRESSMAKER'S, THEN SOME ROUGE AND JEWELRY AND PERFUME AND SHOES AND WINE AND BESIDES...
THE GIRLS' NIGHT OUT!

...I'LL WIN IT ALL BACK GAMBLING!
YOU HAVE TO THINK AHEAD...
MAEVE, MAKE A COPY OF THIS, PLEASE.
THEN RUN IT OVER TO GLESPA'S OFFICE. SHE WANTS TO SEE ALL SISTER BORONWË'S RECORDS.
YES, MY LADY.
LATER THAT AFTERNOON IN THE PHYRUS CLOTH DISTRICT...
DID YOU SEE HIS FACE WHEN I...OOPS, SORRY!
UH... SURE!
I DON'T THINK IT'S TIGHT ENOUGH! DO YOU THINK IT'S TIGHT ENOUGH?
TIGHT ENOUGH!? IF IT WERE ANY TIGHTER, SHE COULDN'T BREATHE!
MAY I HELP YOU, YOUNG SIR?

Oh, YES! YOU HAVE A CLOAK FOR ME.
SAY, THOSE GIRLS, WOULD YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW...I MEAN, IF I WANTED TO..uh...
NEVER SAW THEM BEFORE, BUT I BELIEVE THEY MENTIONED GOING TO THE GOLDEN GIRDLE TONIGHT.
SO WHAT'S THIS PLACE LIKE?
DUNNO. ONE OF THE OLDER GIRLS SAID IT WAS GOOD.
WHO SAID SO?
FERINDA.
SHE'S ONLY A YEAR OLDER AND A SLUT BESIDES!
SO? WANT SOME ROUGE?
IT MAKES YOU LOOK LIKE A BARGIRL!
SO?
ARE YOU TAKING A KNIFE?
I NEVER GO ANYWHERE WITH LESS THAN THREE KNIVES!
THREE?! WHERE DO YOU PUT THEM?
YOU HAVE TO BE CREATIVE!
READY?
AM I EVER! LET'S GO PUB-CRAWLING!
AT THAT MOMENT, A HORDE OF FOUL-VOICED, HEAVILY-ARMED MEN APPROACH THE UNGUARDED OUTSKIRTS OF DISTANT KARKOR!

WHILE IN KARKOR'S ONLY DECENT INN...
I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I'VE BOUGHT THE HORSE AND THE REST OF THE SUPPLIES. WE'LL LEAVE TOMORROW! BE CAREFUL WHILE I'M GONE!
YES, MY LOVE!
VOSSE?
DID YOU COME BACK FOR...OH! YOU'RE THE SLAVE FROM THE SHIP!
EX-SLAVE, KELKI, MY SWEET! I'M A FREE MAN NOW!
BUT A POOR ONE, ALAS! AND I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE GOOD FOR MONEY, ESPECIALLY SINCE I KNOW...
...YOU'RE RUNNING FROM THE SISTERHOOD!
NO! GET OUT OF HERE! I CAN'T GIVE YOU ANY-THING!
YOU'LL PAY, YOU LITTLE BITCH! OR I'LL GO TO THEM THAT CAN!

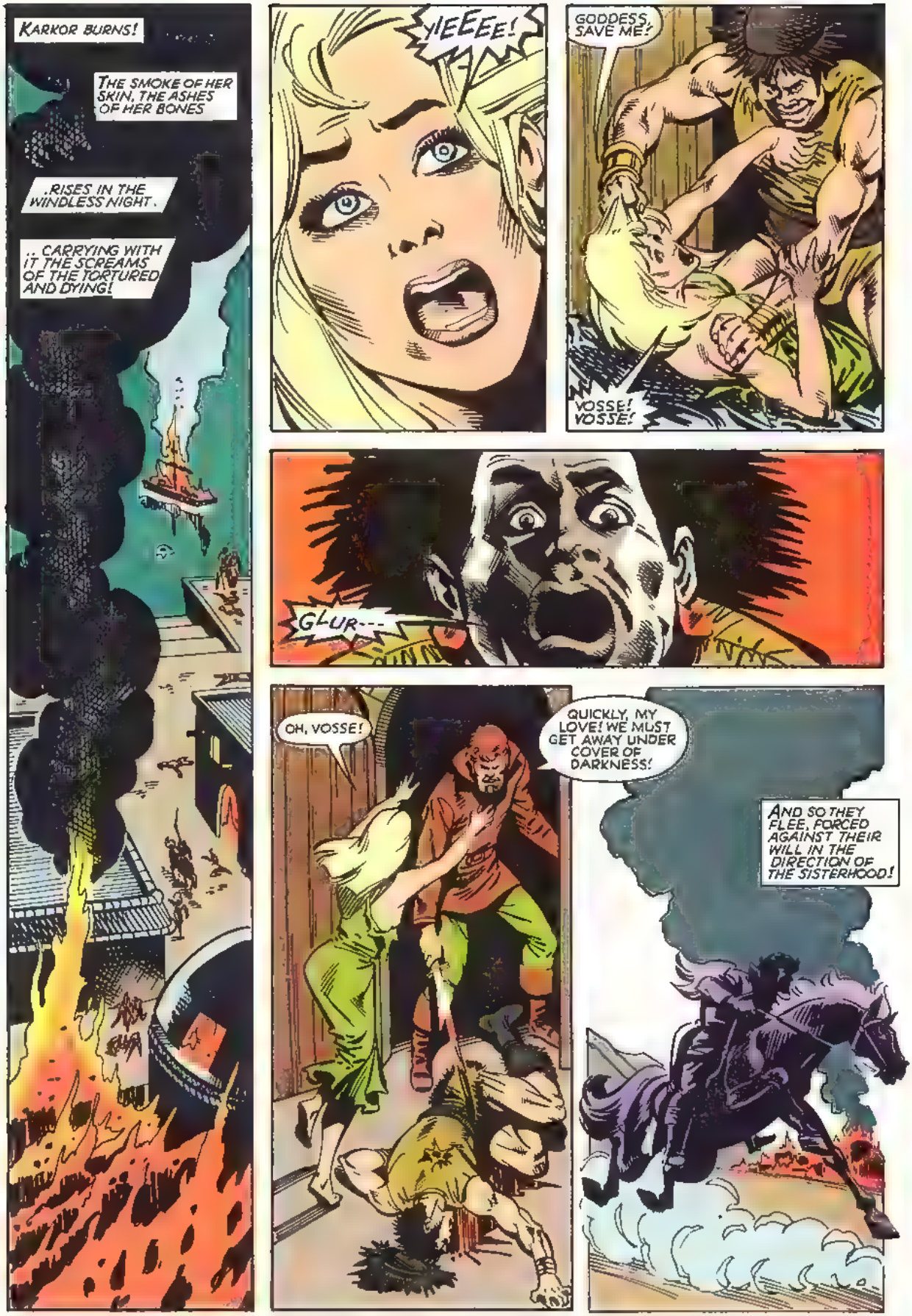
IT'S A WARM, CLEAR EVENING IN PHYRUS...
COME ON, DINDRA! THERE'S MORE TO PICKING A MAN THAN WHAT HE'S GOT BETWEEN HIS LEGS!
YEAH? LIKE WHAT?
LIKE GENTLENESS AND BRAINS AND...LOOK! IT'S A BUNCH OF THE GIRLS WITH FERINDA!
BORONWË! DINDRA! OVER HERE!
HI, ZONAMAE! HOW'S IT GOING?
FEELIN' NO PAIN!
I DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THESE TWO!
IT'S DISGUSTING! EVERY TRICK IN THIS JOINT IS WORKING OUT HOW TO GET IT FREE FROM THOSE FRESH YOUNG THINGS!
LISTEN, SWEET-CHEEKS, THIS IS OUR TERRITORY! GO FLAUNT YOUR GOODS SOMEWHERE ELSE!
BUT, I...

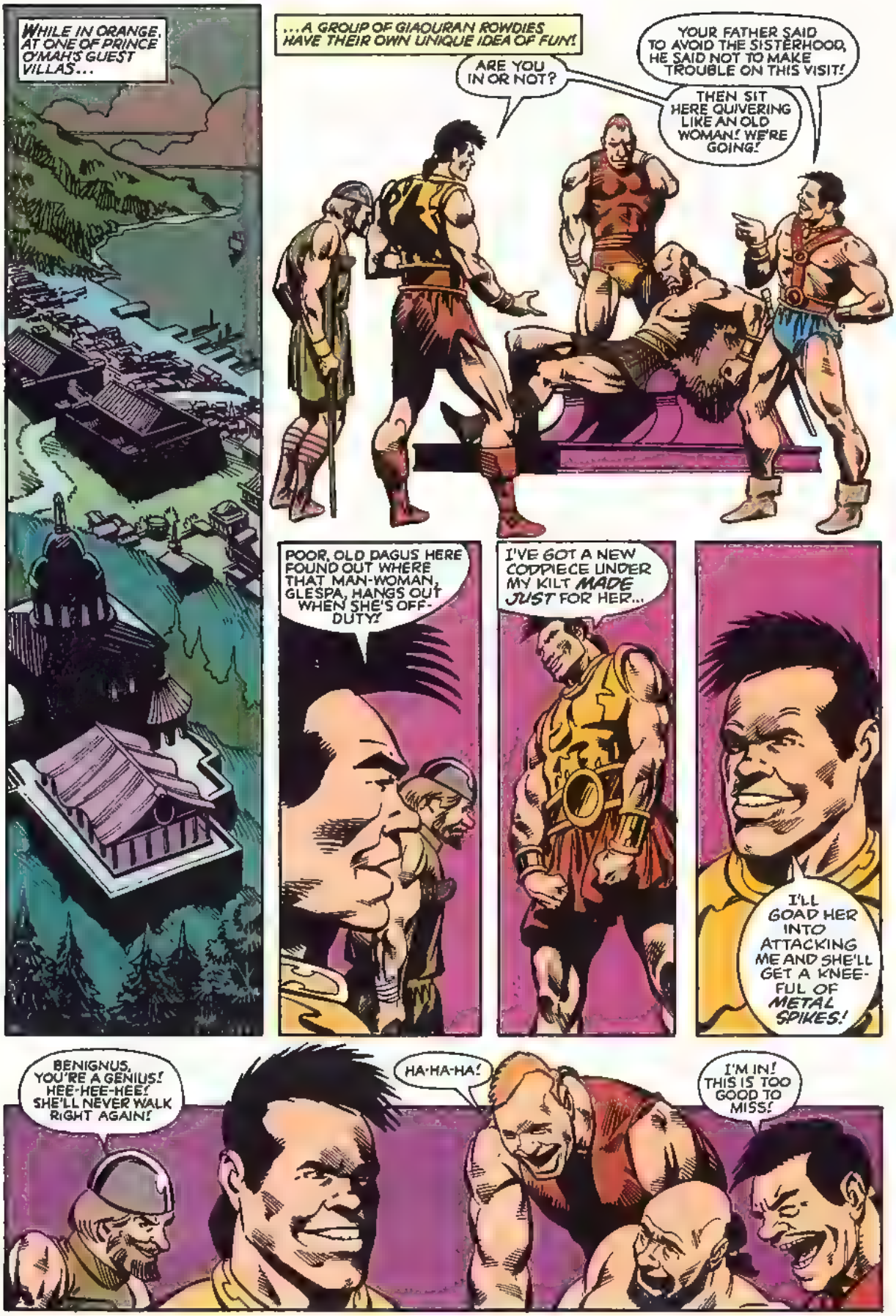
DON'T YOU TALK TO MY FRIEND LIKE THAT!
SIT ON IT!
LOOK OUT, BOYS!
I'LL BET FIVE LACHMA ON THE SISTER!
HAH! YOU'VE NEVER SEEN PRISSE FIGHT! I BET SIX LACHMA ON THE WHORE!
I'LL KILL HER!
WILL YOU MOVE!
I'LL RIP HER EYES OUT!
MOVE!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
IT'S A DREADFUL PLACE, THAT'S WHAT'S THE MATTER!
I DID HEAR ABOUT THIS OTHER PLACE .
NOT FROM FERINDA!?
NO, NO, SOMEBODY ELSE SAID IT HAS LOTS OF MEN...

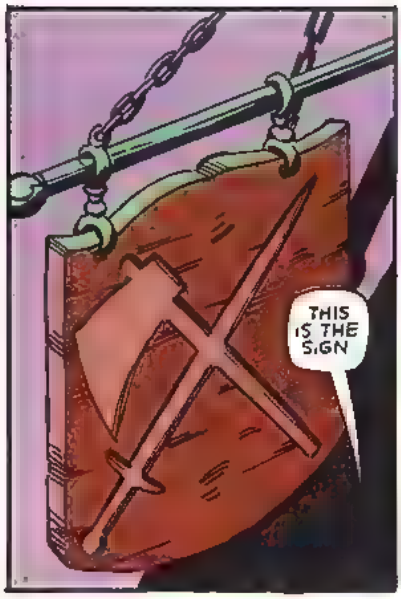
KARKOR..
IT BEGINS LIKE THE SOFT RUMBLE OF FAR-OFF THUNDER!
AND BUILDS TO A POUNDING CRESCENDO OF TERROR!
BARBARIANS!
LISTEN! ARE THOSE SCREAMS?
SOUNDS LIKE HORSES..
GAURGH!
KELK!

PHYRUS...
I TOLD YOU IT HAD TO BE DOWN HERE!
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THIS...
WHAT'S WRONG NOW!
IT'S NOT A VERY GOOD PART OF TOWN!
SHATH'S TEETH, BORONWE! DON'T YOU HAVE ANY SENSE OF ADVENTURE?!
YES, I DO! BUT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE STUPID ABOUT IT!
WE CAN AT LEAST HAVE A LOOK AND IF WE DON'T LIKE WHAT WE SEE, WE CAN. .uh..
HEY, GET AN EYEFUL!
OOH WEE! OVER HERE, HONEYCAKES!
YUM! YUM!
YICK.
YOU WERE SAYING--?

LOOKIN' FOR ANYBODY IN PARTICULAR?
NO.. uh, NOT EXACTLY. . WE..uh...
OUCH! LET GO!
AW, C'MON, HONEY..
SHE SAID LET GO, BUM!
GARRRR!!!
HIT THE STREET!
I'M ON MY WAY!
SO I GOT SOME BAD ADVICE!
THAT'S PUTTING IT MILDLY! GOT ANY MORE HOT TIPS FROM YOUR SO-CALLED FRIENDS?
WELL, THERE WAS ONE MORE--
FORGET IT! I PICK THE NEXT ONE!
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, DON'T GET YOUR KNICKERS IN AN UPROAR!

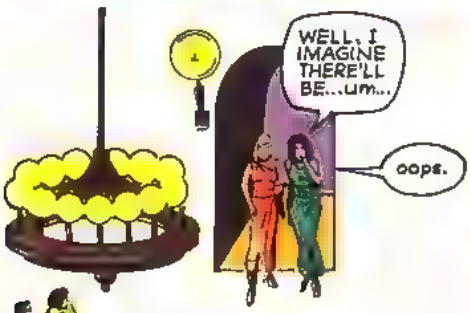

KARKOR BURNS!
THE SMOKE OF HER SKIN, THE ASHES OF HER BONES
..RISES IN THE WINDLESS NIGHT.
.. CARRYING WITH IT THE SCREAMS OF THE TORTURED AND DYING!
YIEEEE!
GODDESS, SAVE ME!
VOSSE! VOSSE!
GLUR---
OH, VOSSE!
QUICKLY, MY LOVE! WE MUST GET AWAY UNDER COVER OF DARKNESS!
AND SO THEY FLEE, FORCED AGAINST THEIR WILL IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SISTERHOOD!


WHILE IN ORANGE, AT ONE OF PRINCE O'MAH'S GUEST VILLAS...
...A GROUP OF GIAOURAN ROWDIES HAVE THEIR OWN UNIQUE IDEA OF FUN!
ARE YOU IN OR NOT?
YOUR FATHER SAID TO AVOID THE SISTERHOOD, HE SAID NOT TO MAKE TROUBLE ON THIS VISIT!
THEN SIT HERE QUIVERING LIKE AN OLD WOMAN! WE'RE GOING!
POOR, OLD DAGUS HERE FOUND OUT WHERE THAT MAN-WOMAN, GLESPA, HANGS OUT WHEN SHE'S OFF-DUTY!
I'VE GOT A NEW CODPIECE UNDER MY KILT MADE JUST FOR HER...
I'LL GOAD HER INTO ATTACKING ME AND SHE'LL GET A KNEE-FUL OF METAL SPIKES!
BENIGNUS, YOU'RE A GENIUS! HEE-HEE-HEE! SHE'LL NEVER WALK RIGHT AGAIN!
HA-HA-HA!
I'M IN! THIS IS TOO GOOD TO MISS!


THIS IS THE SIGN

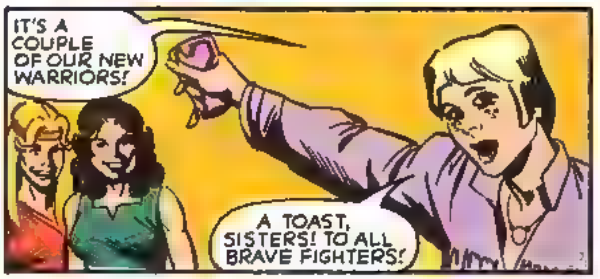
..BATTLING BALINA'S! I GUESS SHE WAS A SISTER WHO BOUGHT HER WAY OUT, THEN OPENED UP THIS PUB..

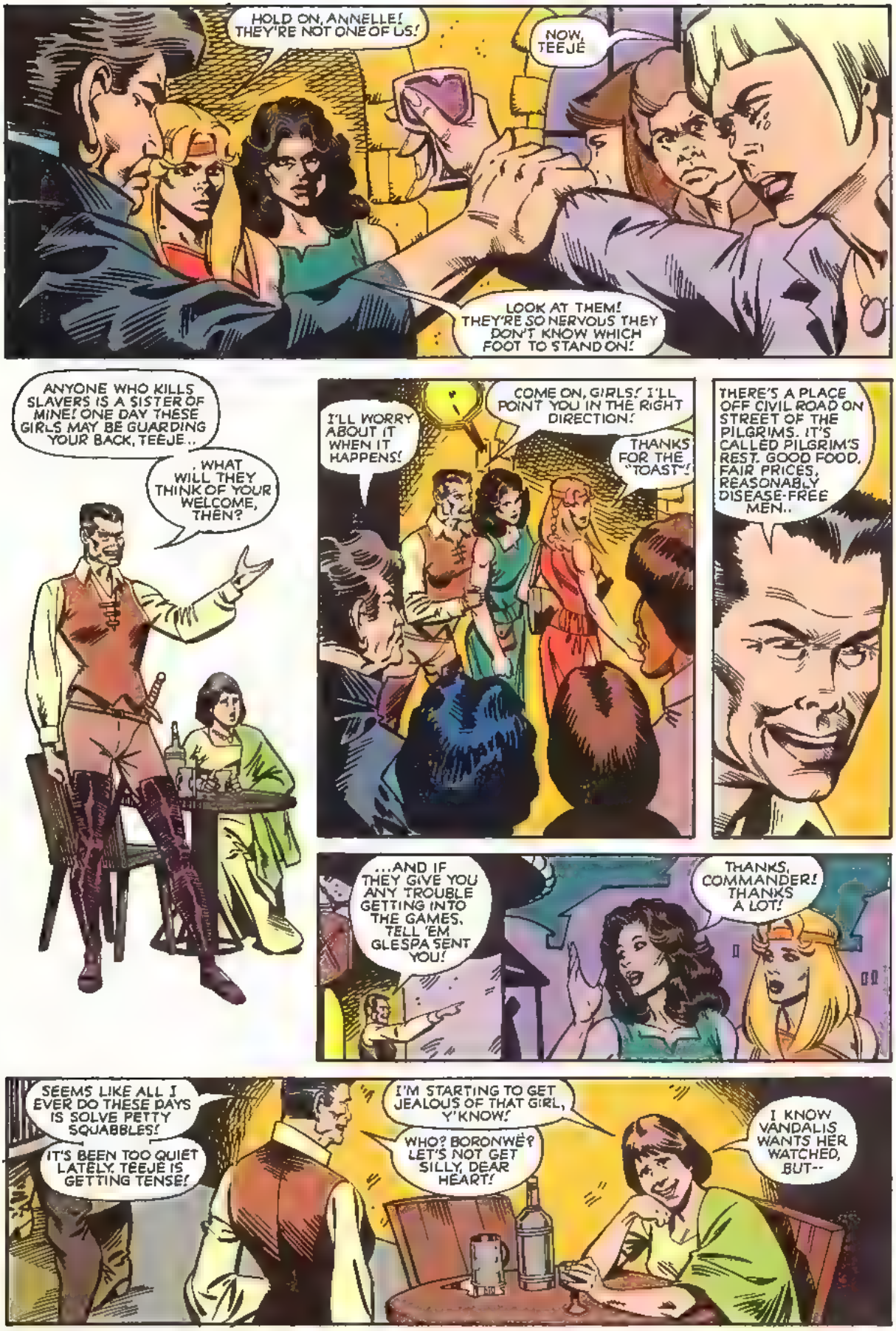
...AND IT'S SUPPOSED TO BE A REAL GATHERING PLACE FOR SISTERS!
WAIT A MINUTE! JUST SISTERS?


WELL, I IMAGINE THERE'LL BE...um...
oops.

AT LEAST MY CHOICES WERE *HALF* RIGHT!
THEY'RE ALL *STARING* AT US!

SHATH'S HAIRIES! IT'S THAT GIRL, BORONWE! FUNNY I WOULDN'T HAVE PICKED HER FOR--
Uh, GLESSIE, THEY LOOK A LITTLE CONFUSED.


IT'S A COUPLE OF OUR NEW WARRIORS!
A TOAST, SISTERS! TO ALL BRAVE FIGHTERS!


HOLD ON, ANNELLE! THEY'RE NOT ONE OF US!
NOW, TEEJE
LOOK AT THEM! THEY'RE SO NERVOUS THEY DON'T KNOW WHICH FOOT TO STAND ON!
ANYONE WHO KILLS SLAVERS IS A SISTER OF MINE! ONE DAY THESE GIRLS MAY BE GUARDING YOUR BACK, TEEJE..
. WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF YOUR WELCOME, THEN?
I'LL WORRY ABOUT IT WHEN IT HAPPENS!
COME ON, GIRLS! I'LL POINT YOU IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION!
THANKS FOR THE "TOAST"!
THERE'S A PLACE OFF CIVIL ROAD ON STREET OF THE PILGRIMS. IT'S CALLED PILGRIM'S REST. GOOD FOOD, FAIR PRICES, REASONABLY DISEASE-FREE MEN..
...AND IF THEY GIVE YOU ANY TROUBLE GETTING INTO THE GAMES, TELL 'EM GLESPA SENT YOU!
THANKS, COMMANDER! THANKS A LOT!
SEEMS LIKE ALL I EVER DO THESE DAYS IS SOLVE PETTY SQUABBLES!
IT'S BEEN TOO QUIET LATELY. TEEJE IS GETTING TENSE!
I'M STARTING TO GET JEALOUS OF THAT GIRL, Y'KNOW!
WHO? BORONWE? LET'S NOT GET SILLY, DEAR HEART!
I KNOW VANDALIS WANTS HER WATCHED, BUT--

VAN WANTS HER BAGGED FOR TREASON!
AND WHAT THE PRINCESS WANTS, THE PRINCESS USUALLY G--
BY THE GODDESS!
ME 'N' THE BOYS HAVE COME TO GET LAID!
GET OUT, GIAOURAN! GET OUT NOW OR-
DON'T YOU WISH YOU HAD THE GUTS TO MAKE ME!
WHEN I GET THROUGH WITH YOUR GUTS, YOU'LL BE CHOKING ON THEM!
I'M SO SCARED!
YOU'RE BIG ON THREATS, DOG-FACE! LET'S SEE YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT THEM!
HEE-HEE!
THE BASTARD WANTS ME TO GIVE HIM THE KNEE!

WARNED BY DECADES OF FIGHTING INSTINCT, GLESPA IGNORES THE OBVIOUS...
...AND GOES STRAIGHT FOR THE CHIN!
ALL THOSE STORIES I'VE HEARD ABOUT THE OLD BOAR! HELL, SHE'S NOT SO BAD!
C'MON! I WANT TO FIND THIS PLACE!
YAAAA!
I'M COMING, BENIGNUS!
SAVE SOME FOR ME!
HEY, THE MUSIC SOUNDS GOOD!
IT LOOKS GOOD!
MMMM, IT SMELLS TERRIFIC!
HOT DAMN! I THINK THIS IS IT!
I'VE HAD IT! IF THEY DON'T STOP HERE...

ALL RIGHT! ;glurp!; I CAN FEEL THE LUCK COMING! I'M CALLING DOUBLES!
S'CUSE ME, MISS! I'UZ WUNNERIN'.. ;URP!;...WUN-NERIN' IF--
AW! TOO BAD, SWEET-HEART!
SKIT!
GIVE ME A LOAN, SWORD-MATE!
GO SLOBBER ON SOMEBODY ELSE!
YOU'VE LOST ALL YOUR MONEY ALREADY?!
I WAS AFRAID GOING OUT WITH DINDRA WOULD BE LIKE THIS! SHE'S SUCH A GOURDHEAD! I WONDER IF I SHOULD ASK FOR A NEW SWORDMATE? BUT SHE IS A GOOD FIGHTER. MAYBE SHE'LL CALM DOWN AFTER AWHILE.
PARDON ME, WOULD YOU LIKE TO LEAVE BE-FORE THE NEXT FIGHT BEGINS?
FIGHT?! WHERE?!
PLEASE, BORONWE! I'M GOING TO BE LUCKY! I CAN FEEL IT!
YOU SAID THAT BEFORE, DINDRA!
DON'T EMBARRASS ME IN FRONT OF THESE GUYS!
WELL ..I'LL DO IT THIS ONCE! HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT?
HOW MUCH DO YOU HAVE?
HAA-HA-HA-HA-HAHA! I'M SORRY! I COULDN'T RESIST!
Oooh, I LOVE HIS LAUGH!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
I'VE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU ALL NIGHT...
YOU HAVE!?
...LIKE A HUNTER AFTER A SPRING BUTTERFLY!
I KEPT WAITING FOR YOU TO SETTLE DOWN SOMEWHERE LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO INTRODUCE MYSELF!

I'M ELQUIN.
BORONWË.
I KNOW A SPOT WHERE WE CAN LISTEN TO NIGHTBIRDS INSTEAD OF DRINKS AND DICE!
SOUNDS NICE!

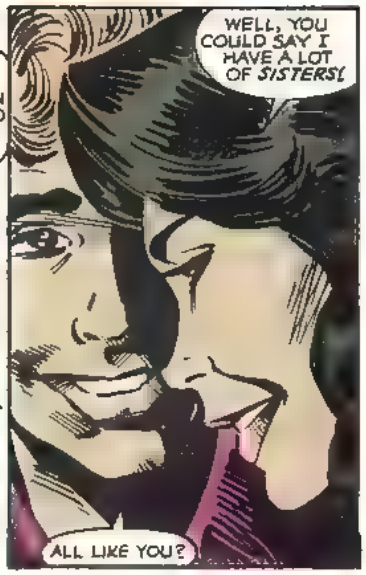
WATCH THIS, BORONWË! LUCK IS BREATHING DOWN MY NECK!
ROLL 'EM, GIRLIE!

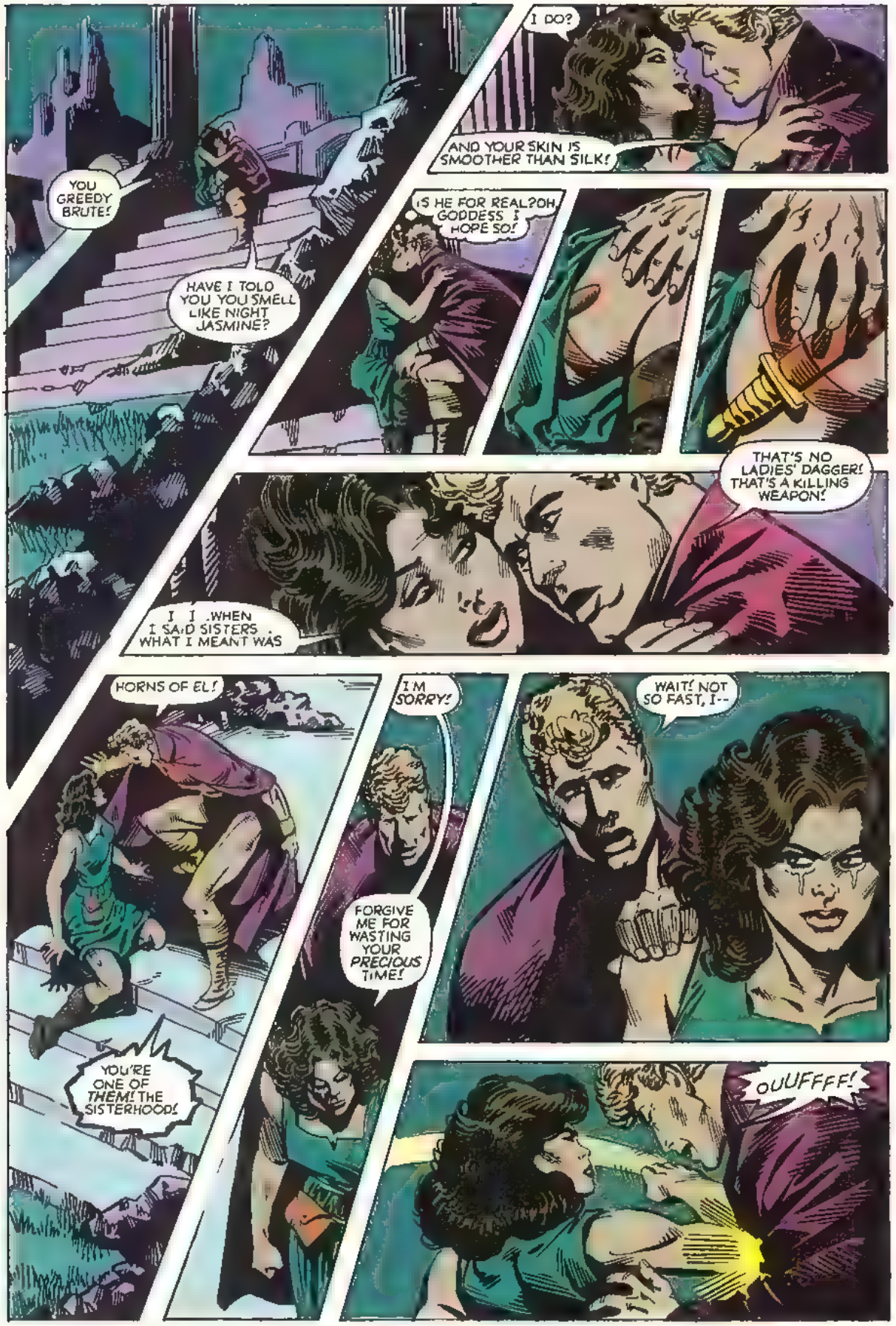
"I MUST BE CRAZY TO COME UP HERE ALONE!
"I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM. HE COULD BE DANGEROUS. THE WAY HE MOVES, SO QUIET AND SURE OF HIMSELF.
"STRANGE. WE'VE HARDLY SAID A WORD, YET I FEEL...COMFORTABLE WITH HIM. AS IF SILENCE WERE THE MOST NATURAL THING IN THE WORLD.

I COME HERE WHEN I WANT TO BE ALONE AND THINK. DO YOU LIKE IT, BORONWË?
YES, IT'S PEACEFUL. I SUPPOSE YOU THINK I'M. I'M

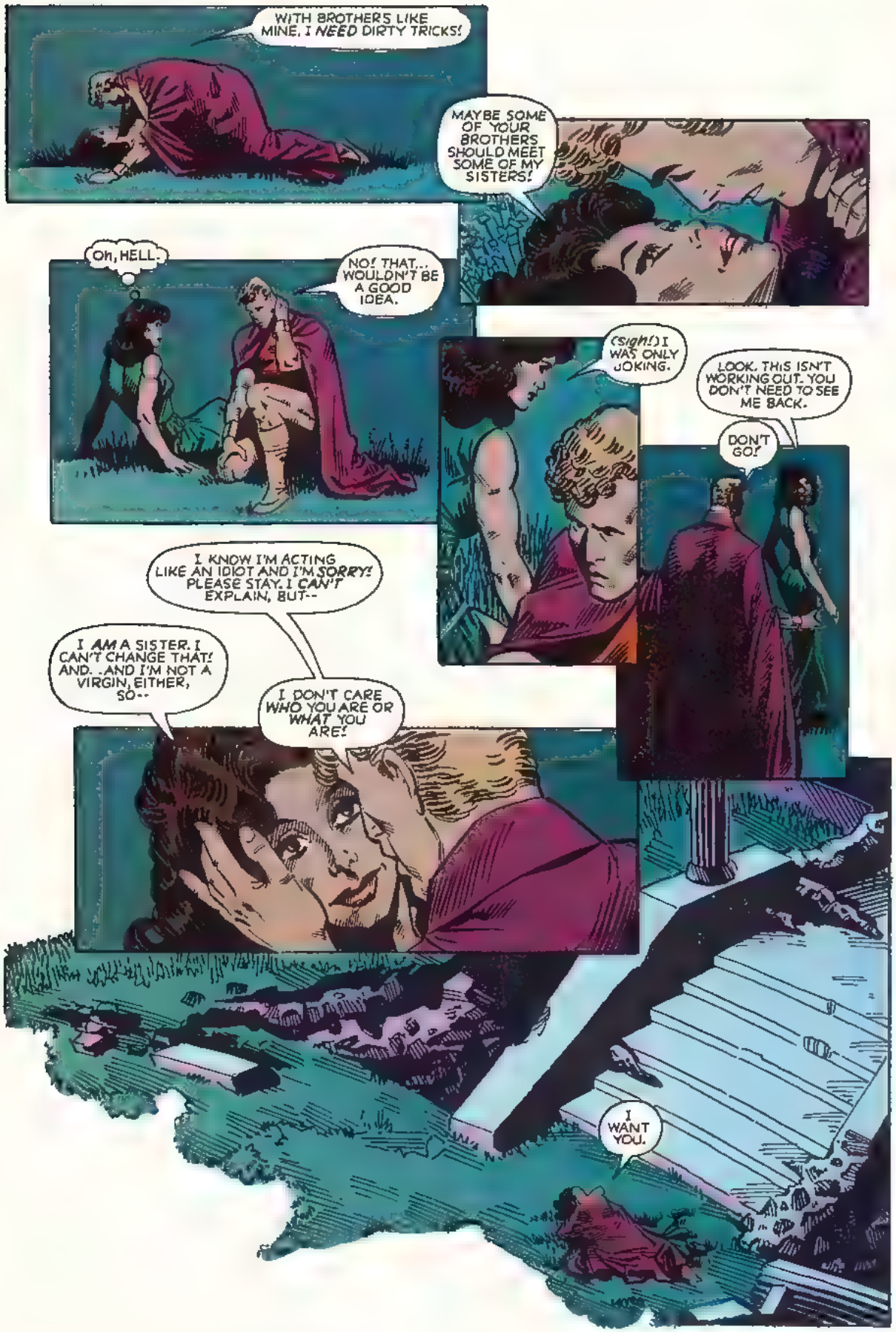
I THINK YOU'RE BEAUTIFUL
Mmmm

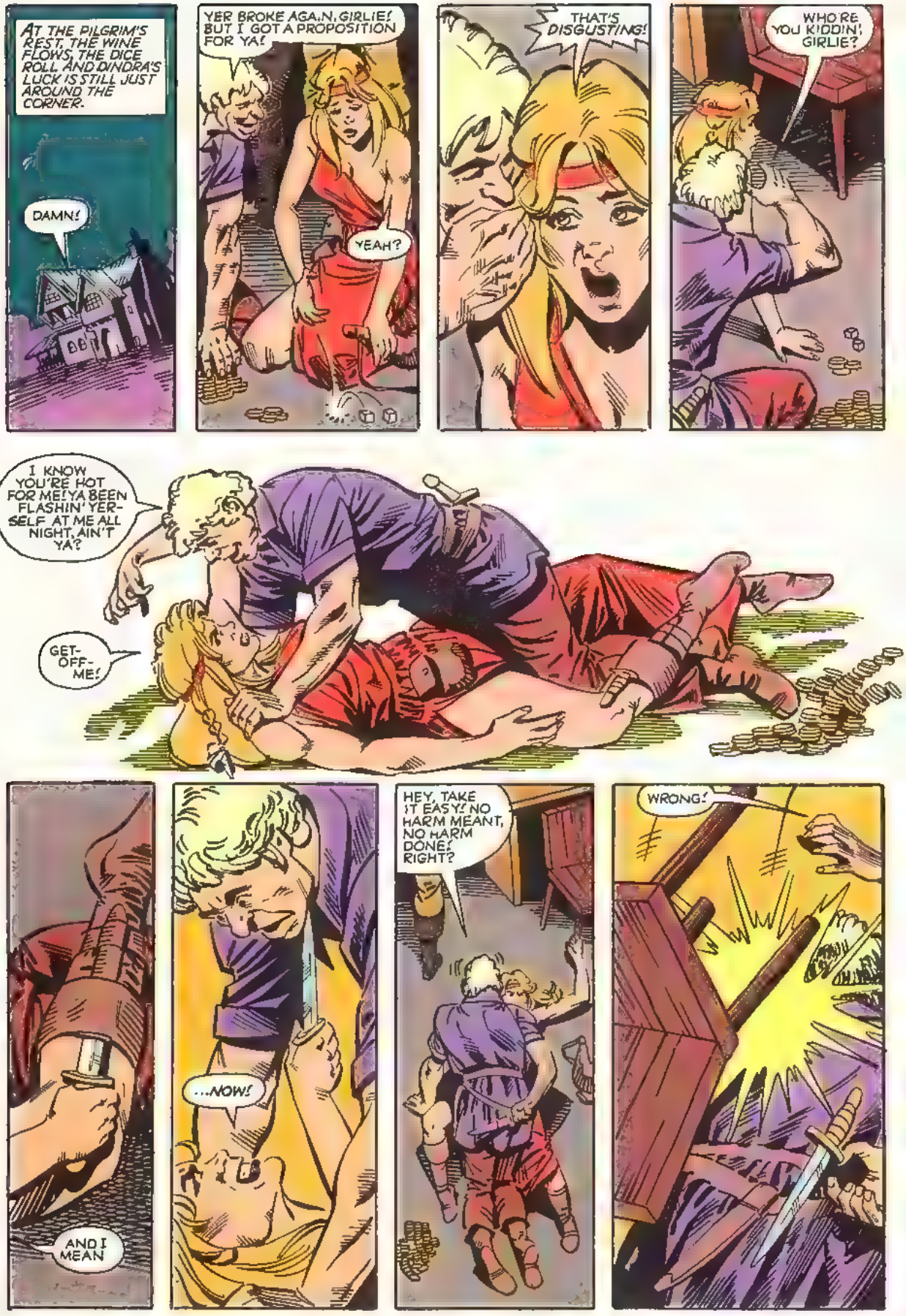
AND DINDRA THOUGHT *SHE* WAS LUCKY!
IT *IS* NICE TO GET AWAY, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU'RE SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE ALL THE TIME.
YOU HAVE A LARGE *FAMILY*?


WELL, YOU COULD SAY I HAVE A LOT OF *SISTERS*!
ALL LIKE YOU?


YOU GREEDY BRUTE!
HAVE I TOLD YOU YOU SMELL LIKE NIGHT JASMINE?
I DO?
AND YOUR SKIN IS SMOOTHER THAN SILK!
IS HE FOR REAL?OH GODDESS I HOPE SO!
THAT'S NO LADIES' DAGGER! THAT'S A KILLING WEAPON!
I I .WHEN I SAID SISTERS . WHAT I MEANT WAS
HORNS OF EL!
YOU'RE ONE OF THEM! THE SISTERHOOD!
I'M SORRY!
FORGIVE ME FOR WASTING YOUR PRECIOUS TIME!
WAIT! NOT SO FAST, I--
OUUFFFF!

Unnn...Unnn...
OH! DID I HURT YOU? ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
AH HAH! GOT YOU NOW YOU LITTLE VIXEN!
Oh, YEAH?
HEE-HEE-HAHAHA! THAT'LL TEACH YOU TO GRAB A--
EEEEK!
NOW WHERE WERE WE?
HAHA! SITTING UP!
THAT'S NO FUN!
I--giggle--I KNOW! THAT WAS A DIRTY TRICK!

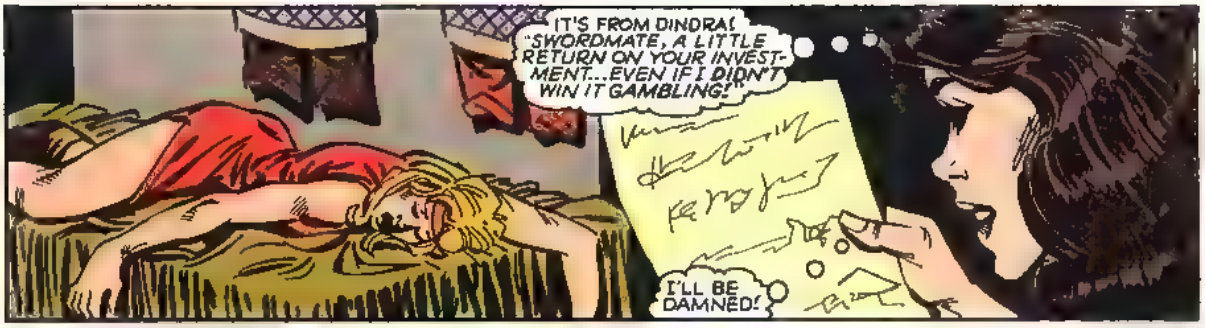

WITH BROTHERS LIKE MINE, I NEED DIRTY TRICKS!
MAYBE SOME OF YOUR BROTHERS SHOULD MEET SOME OF MY SISTERS!
OH, HELL.
NO! THAT... WOULDN'T BE A GOOD IDEA.
(SIGH!) I WAS ONLY JOKING.
LOOK. THIS ISN'T WORKING OUT. YOU DON'T NEED TO SEE ME BACK.
DON'T GO!
I KNOW I'M ACTING LIKE AN IDIOT AND I'M SORRY! PLEASE STAY. I CAN'T EXPLAIN, BUT--
I AM A SISTER. I CAN'T CHANGE THAT! AND. .AND I'M NOT A VIRGIN, EITHER, SO--
I DON'T CARE WHO YOU ARE OR WHAT YOU ARE!
I WANT YOU.

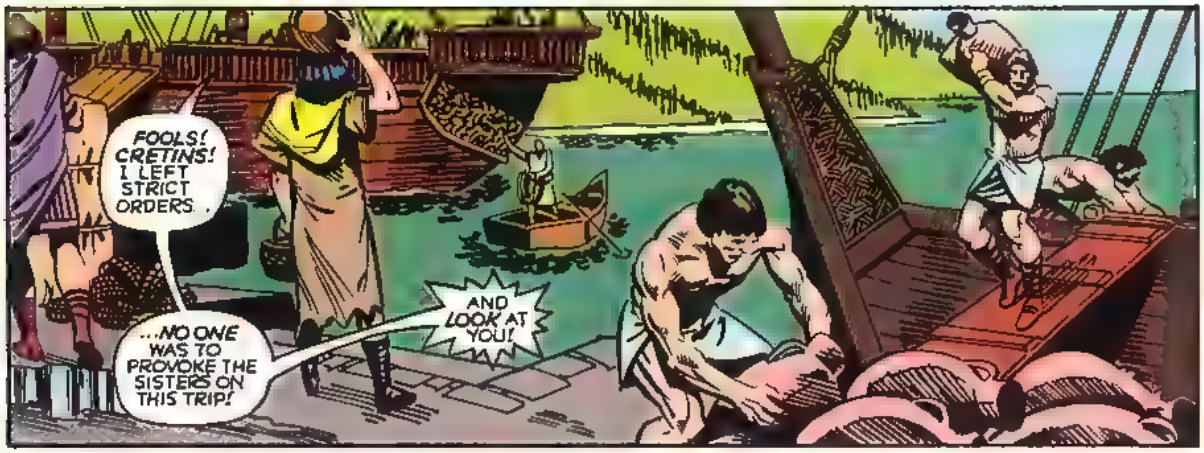

AT THE PILGRIM'S REST, THE WINE FLOWS, THE DICE ROLL, AND DINDRA'S LUCK IS STILL JUST AROUND THE CORNER.
DAMN!
YER BROKE AGA.N, GIRLIE! BUT I GOT A PROPOSITION FOR YA!
YEAH?
THAT'S DISGUSTING!
WHO'RE YOU KIDDIN', GIRLIE?
I KNOW YOU'RE HOT FOR ME! YA BEEN FLASHIN' YER-SELF AT ME ALL NIGHT, AIN'T YA?
GET-OFF-ME!
AND I MEAN
...NOW!
HEY, TAKE IT EASY! NO HARM MEANT, NO HARM DONE! RIGHT?
WRONG!

GAHGUH!
CLUMSY JERK!
DOG!
PIG!
WHORE!
HELP!
BITCH!
WHERE ARE YOU GOING!?
I THOUGHT I HEARD SOMETHING IN THE BUSHES!
NO ONE ELSE EVER COMES HERE IT'S JUST YOU, ME AND THE ANIMALS! GROWRRR!
HAHA! I KNOW WHO THE ANIMAL IS AROUND HERE!
THIS IS KIND OF EMBARRASSING, BUT... TELL ME YOUR NAME AGAIN.
IT'S ... GWIN.

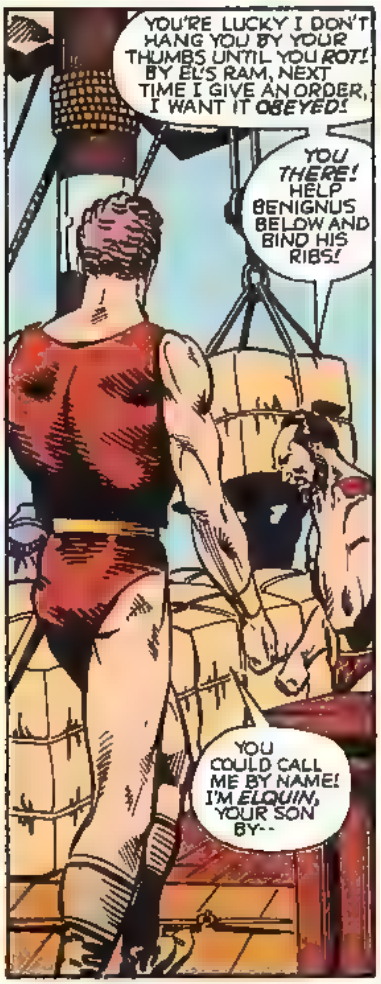
THE MORNING AFTER. BROKEN FURNITURE...
.. BROKEN HEARTS...
.. BROKEN DOORS ..
...AND BROKEN BODIES!
IT WAS ONE HELL OF A NIGHT IN PHYRUS.
PLEASE
I WANT TO! BUT I HAVEN'T GOTTEN MY DUTY ASSIGNMENT YET. I COULD BE SENT ANYWHERE!
SO COULD I! MY, uh, FAMILY TRADES ON THE SEA. I MIGHT HAVE TO LEAVE AT ANY TIME!
I HAVE TO LEAVE, GWIN.
I WANT TO SEE YOU AGAIN CAN YOU COME BACK TONIGHT?
I DON'T KNOW!
THEN...LET'S BE HAPPY WITH WHAT WE HAD! ONE OF MY TEACHERS TAUGHT US TO GRAB EVERY SECOND OF HAPPINESS WE COULD, BECAUSE WE NEVER KNOW WHEN WE MIGHT DIE!

YOU'RE COLD! TAKE MY CLOAK!
Oh, NO, I COULDN'T...
Oh, YES, YOU WILL!
BORONWË, I'LL BE HERE IN THIS SPOT! TONIGHT, TOMORROW NIGHT, EVERY NIGHT I CAN! PROMISE YOU'LL COME BACK!
I PROMISE, GWIN, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHEN! GOOD-BYE!
I CAN CATCH A FEW HOURS SLEEP BEFORE HIGH BELLS.
I WONDER HOW DINDRA DID? WAIT'LL I TELL HER...
THAT LOOKS LIKE THE COMMANDER AND THE CAPTAIN! WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM!?
COMMANDER!
MAY I GIVE YOU A HAND?
WHO'S THAT?
MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS!
YES, COMMANDER.
GLESSIE! DON'T BE LIKE THAT! SHE ONLY WANTED TO HELP!
I WILL NEVER UNDERSTAND HER AS LONG AS I LIVE, I SWEAR!
Uh-oh, EVERYONE ELSE IS IN BED ALREADY! I'LL HAVE TO BE REAL QUIET. SHATH'S TEETH! DINDRA! SHE'S BEEN FIGHTING!
GUESS I'LL HAVE TO WAIT TO FIND OUT. WHAT'S ALL THIS MONEY?!

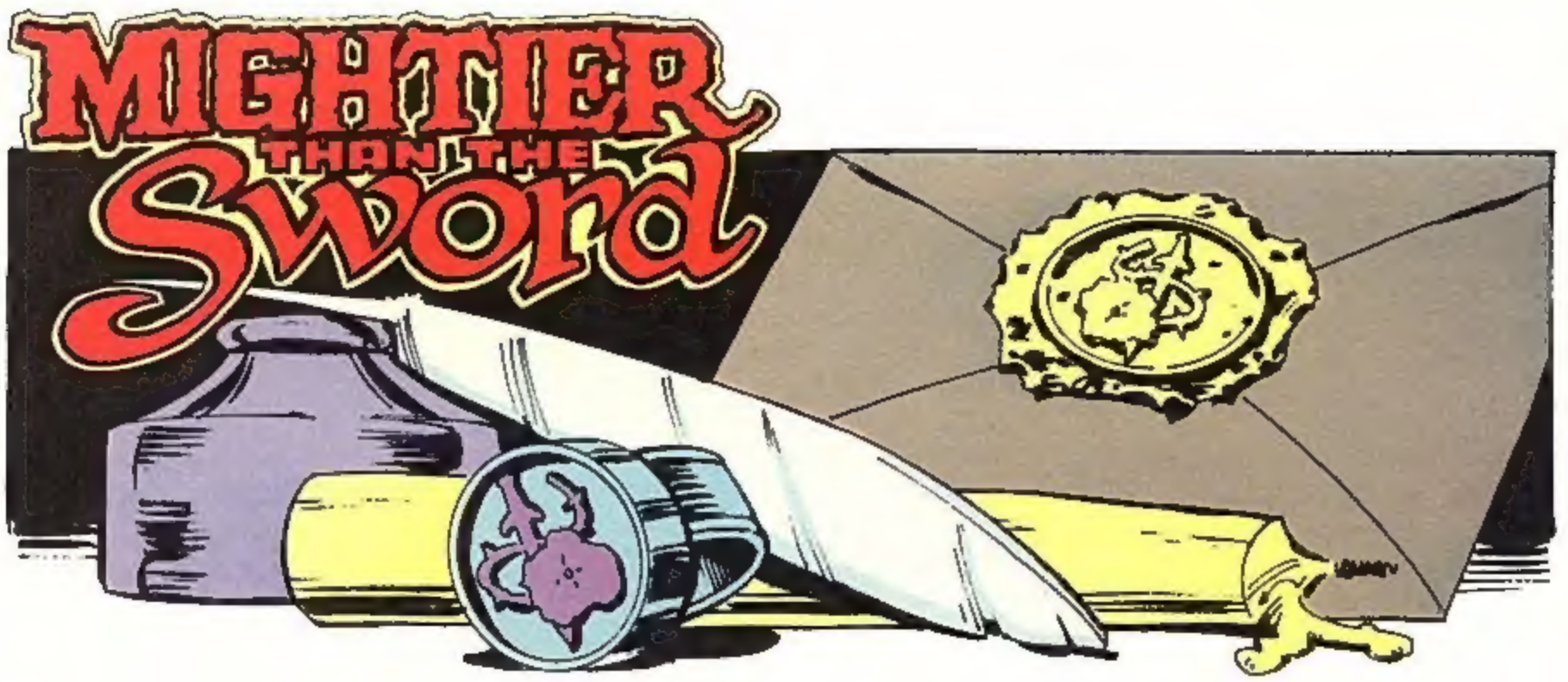

IT'S FROM DINDRA! "SWORDMATE, A LITTLE RETURN ON YOUR INVESTMENT...EVEN IF I DIDN'T WIN IT GAMBLING!"
I'LL BE DAMNED!


FOOLS! CRETINS! I LEFT STRICT ORDERS...
...NO ONE WAS TO PROVOKE THE SISTERS ON THIS TRIP!
AND LOOK AT YOU!

BEATEN TO A PULP, EVERY LAST ONE OF YOU! IF YOU'RE GOING TO FIGHT THE BITCHES...
...THE LEAST YOU CAN DO IS WIN!
AW, COME ON, FATHER! YOU HAVEN'T SEEN THEM! WE DID ALL RIGHT!


YOU'RE LUCKY I DON'T HANG YOU BY YOUR THUMBS UNTIL YOU ROT! BY EL'S RAM, NEXT TIME I GIVE AN ORDER, I WANT IT OBEYED!
YOU THERE! HELP BENIGNUS BELOW AND BIND HIS RIBS!
YOU COULD CALL ME BY NAME! I'M ELQUIN, YOUR SON BY--

DON'T GIVE ME ANY LIP! DO IT!
YES.. FATHER
NEXT: Passion, Pain and Politics!!



Dear Christy and Mike,

You asked me to boot up my computer . . . so here's the printout! Anyway, I'd like to say that when I first saw ads for this mag, I wasn't impressed by the concept. However, I did pick up the first ish just to see how things went. I must say I was impressed by the overall appearance and story. The colors (who did the colors?) were brilliant, particularly in the Ataluma flashbacks.

The atmosphere was one of cheer and happy-go-luckiness, perfectly complemented by the saga of poor Kelki and Vandalis' rage. It's nice to know that there was a happy ending to this introductory story instead of one of those horrid cliffhangers we so often see in mainstream Marvels. Perhaps the only bad thing about your premiere outing was the fact that Boronwë's past is still shrouded in mystery. How about some flashbacks so we can find out her life history?

Lastly, I would like to say that Mike Vosburg has never been one of my favourite artists until this issue where he jumps safely into the top ten or so.

Well, I've raved on long enough. Better let you guys get on with whatever you're doing.

How about "Matrix Mails" for a lettercol title?

Tadeusz Tietze
Queensland, AUSTRALIA

The coloring on #1 was a group effort by myself, Mike and Mary Zdrodwoski. The coloring on #2 onward is Mike's unless credited otherwise. As hinted at in #3, Boronwë was taken from her mother at the age of 4 and spent her life in training on Ildana. Her desire to learn her mother's identity is a subject to be tackled much further down the line.

Dear Ms. Marx,

All I can say is thank you, and it's about time! **The Sisterhood of Steel** is like a dream come true for me. I grew up on **Wonder Woman** comics, learning to be strong and have confidence in myself by imitating her Amazon philosophies. Even though the comic tended to get outrageous with its variety of unbelievable villains, **Wonder Woman** always inspired me and I have longed to see other females follow the act in comicland. Other heroines have tried and failed, in my eyes, until **Sisterhood of Steel** came along. It has all the fantasy, excitement, and feminism of **Wonder Woman**, plus so much more!

What I love the best about the **Sisterhood** series is how realistic the characters, plots, and philosophies are for a comic which combines the new with the old so perfectly. The spiritualism and mythology behind the storyline also give it such a special quality. Without those, **Sisterhood** might be considered just another hack-and-slay adventure series, only where the women are more brutal than the men. But there is so very much more to **The Sisterhood** than that!

I like the glossary a lot. It gives the comic a classy look to it. It will also be okay when you decide to drop the list and add the letters column; just add a small note of details in the back of each comic as new characters and ideas are introduced. Then print the full glossary again at certain intervals, like in Annuals and that sort. Definitely keep developing the characters the way you have been! They are all great — especially Boronwë!

Don't be paranoid! You have a fantastic comic going here! All my friends and pen pals are talking about it. Keep up the good work.

Mitzi Silverman
Boulder, CO

Your letter gave me a real boost, Mitzi. It's a challenge for Mike and me to attempt to make a book like this succeed in a market that seems dominated by super heroes and hard action. I must say, though, I don't consider myself to be a feminist and therefore am not deliberately writing a "feminist" comic, but I do hope that the ***Sisterhood*** *will pull in more female readers without turning away the male readers. From the letters received so far, it looks like we're doing it.*

Dear Marvel,

Sisterhood of Steel #1 didn't impress me very much. When I first heard about this comic, I figured it was a cheap **Wonder Woman** rip-off — after all, the concept of an island of Amazons

is hardly an original one — and this issue did little to change my mind.

I don't like **Wonder Woman** at all — I find her comic to be incredibly boring — but I'm willing to give **SOS** a try. I'll give you a couple more issues to prove yourselves. My overall reaction is that **SOS** is not a bad comic, but the story and art are just average. Of course, the cover by Mike Saenz was dazzling — if only that type of quality could come through in the rest of the comic.

I think you introduced too many characters with hard-to-pronounce names, and too much new terminology. I hate it when writers try to establish a whole new society in just one issue. You should save some stuff for future issues. Otherwise, it's too confusing. I realize you have the glossaries in the back, but still, the reader shouldn't have to work to enjoy the comic.

As it stands now, in order for **SOS** to keep my attention, it may have to send out an S.O.S.

Barry Dutter
Scotch Plains, NJ

Even the state of California is named after Califa, queen of an island of Amazons from a 16th century adventure novel. Although I did read some ***Wonder Woman*** *in my early teens, I can honestly say that neither it nor the original legend had anything to do with the creation of the* ***Sisterhood.*** *I started out with my title and worked from there. The Sisters are not invincible Amazons. I'd originally thought of putting them on a peninsula, but an island seemed more plausibly defended and fit the origin better. There is a lot to digest, but what's wrong with exercising your brain a little? I refuse to accept the idea that comics must be a quick and easy read on the toilet. If that's what you want, there's plenty of that pap on the market.*

I want readers with a taste for complexity, even if that takes some extrawork — like reading it more than once and even !Gasp! thinking about it. There's plenty more stuff left over for future issues, don't worry. We've barely scratched the surface.

Dear Christy and Mike,

Firstly, I'll say that you have surprised me. I took a chance on **The Sisterhood of Steel** primarily because of another **Epic** title, **Dreadstar**, because I felt I owed it to **Epic** to at least try such an interesting concept on for size. I didn't expect much. However, after reading this premiere issue, I must say that you have done an excellent job with this thing. I was impressed with the artwork and intrigued with the writer's concepts. Christy, you have created a very believable world here, be it fantasy or not. I say believable because of my theatre background, meaning that even if you create a fantasy world onstage or printed page, it must be believable to the audience that these things could happen if conditions were just right.

I like these characters (they seem like those one could find in a fantasy / science fiction novel — take that as a compliment), and it doesn't matter to me whether they are women or not because they are people first — not two dimensional caricatures created for a fast buck or as a vehicle for half-baked philosophies. They are honest.

I look forward to coming issues, and I must mention that while I can accept some of the modernisms in the language that are present, I don't think that "sucks" was in vogue in this time / dimension frame — fantasy or not. Now that the criticism's over, let me congratulate you Christy, on a fine effort. I hope to see more believable characters who happen to be female, black, oriental, etc. And I hope that women, blacks, orientals, etc. will write these stories and bring them to us.

Mike Rosser
Mt. Airy, NC

I agree. I realized a long time ago that fantasy only works when it has a strong internal logic to support it. The more far-out the fantasy, the more it needs its own consistency. I debated over using "sucks." I'm careful to avoid modernisms that are too jarring, but then again I'm going for a certain sound and feel and in this case I felt it would work.

Dear Christy Marx,

Congrats and kudos (well, they say it in Hollywood — I never met a kudo) on creating **The Sisterhood of Steel**. Obviously, I bought the premier issue; I like new things. Especially if they're different enough to be rewarding. It's an original concept with lots of possibilities. The art is very good, even beyond what one conceives as "comic book." The narrative is constructive, and better than so much **Marvel** mush. You asked about "what works" for me as a reader, and I'm about to spill the beans. That I like something is always a "given." However, keep two more things in mind; I'm no expert and I recognize this. And, that I'm trying to help. Hey, you asked.

First, the art. What surprised me was the accurate representation of women as *humans*, and some resemblance to men. In the same context, though, page 24, panels 6 and 7 featuring Vandalis does not work. The next two, and previous ones, work. Do you want human representation, or outright male imitation? I like the pre-history flashbacks. But telling two different stories the same way — page 12 — confuses, at first. Doesn't work. Same thing, starting on page 16. One more thing — is Kelki a

direct line descendant of Ataluma? Is Boronwë Vandalis' daughter? I can live with the similarities, but not when they appear so close, and so often. Other than that, it's good stuff.

Michelangelo had a concept of chiselling out only what "appeared natural to the material." This concept is also in "The Dollmaker." The tree stump she intended to carve seemed to already have a certain form. So, this is tough, especially since someone else holds the chisel. There already are clichés of an island full of women. Overcoming them is a challenge I admire someone else for tackling. However, physically, the island doesn't look like it will hold all the drama involved. Already, this story is made separate and unimportant to the Matrix you began explaining. Pick it up, please. I don't understand where Boronwë fits in. This island itself brings up the question of keeping these women alive, uncramped, and un-related to each other. By the way, the crowd scene on page 27 seems accurate. The island's size forces you to make the women almost intimately familiar, so that the guard on page 13, Boronwë's opponent on page 15, and passersby on page 20 cannot be taken for granted.

Since the island is also on another tangent, there's no need to take up present, real issues. I'm sure the women as a society are not all dykes, or celibate — so, where are the men? Are they kept as slaves? Do they hate all men? Is passion only directed toward war? A Page was mentioned on page 22. Male or female? I'm sure the women as a society are not completely vengeful. Yes, I am keeping Kelki and Vosse in mind.

Things I wish you'd clear up, not just let them sit, are the conflicts between Lanna and Vandalis, the one concerning Kelki and Boronwë, and all this stuff concerning the houses, etc. The biggest thing I see happening here is Boronwë becoming a Daughter of Death, whose first assignment is to bring Kelki to justice. Her decision on page 18 and love for Kelki may force her to draw certain lines, or make a more permanent decision.

In the Trinity, the Priestess seems wide open for deviousness. I actually call her the high point on the triangle. I hope you explain the fact that Greyan is the least sorcerous. This makes me even more suspicious of her. Who is the Matron? The Queen? Is there always war? What about Science? Exploration? Agriculture? Documentation? Medicine?

Again, congratulations. Even if you just think about what I've said, I'd be flattered. Hey, it's your chisel. I'm anxious to see other issues.

I wouldn't mind spending a few nights with Boronwë, especially if that's her on the cover. Nope, the concept of aggressive women bothers me not one bit. Especially with tenderness somewhere underneath. Kelki proved that!

Thanks for your time and attention.

Capella Francis Blue
Nashua, NH

I saw a one-eyed, one-horned, flying purple kudo the other day, winging its way to Hollywood. No, Kelki is not a descendant of Ataluma; Boronwë is not Vandalis' daughter. As these last couple of issues have shown, Ildana is the heart of the Sisterhood and a training ground, but the vast bulk of the Sisters are in outposts doing what they were raised to do — serve as warriors. Men may come to Ildana as visitors, but not live there; no slaves; pages are young Sister novices; each individual woman directs her passions as her personality leads her. The story behind the hatred between Lanna and Vandalis is coming up! The rest of your questions are subjects to which we've given thought and will weave into the storylines when and where feasible.

Dear Christy and Company,

Since you asked, I thought I'd put down a few thoughts about **Sisterhood of Steel #1**. When I first ordered the book (I belong to a comic co-op, we order three months in advance) I did not expect too much. The book's title came across as rather tacky but, I figured it was worth a shot just because it was so unusual.

I like the basic city / state setting for **The Sisterhood**. It makes their autonomy credible and allows for a more stable and insular society. The fact that they are an island nation enhances this. I haven't seen any mention of agriculture in your island nation, yet. It is rather important that they be at least partially self sufficient in food production. Otherwise they could be all too easily hurt by a sustained blockade. A simple scene or two can deal with this aspect of the world you have created, eg: a scene of a farm or something similar.

By the way, is this a slave culture? Even a society that gains income through mercenaries needs some sort of internal support.

I'm also curious about the state of military technology on the Sisterhood's isle. Do they have their own crafts people? Page two would suggest they do not. This would not only be unfortunate, but, unlikely. If you look at other island nations, such as Japan and Britain, you will see they did have internal sources of weaponry. I hope this is the case for your society. It would make it more three dimensional.

I hope you bring out a three dimensionality to the conflict between Lanna and Vandalis. I hope it turns out to be essentially a difference between distinct points of view. Much like

the difference between Charles Xavier and Magneto, as Claremont has depicted them. They both want similar things but, their methods are quite different. Xavier has his basic faith in the goodness of humanity, while Magneto's outlook is colored by seeing his people obliterated by Nazis. Both have valid viewpoints. It would make **The Sisterhood** storyline more effective if Lanna and Vandalis had a similar conflict, in so far as their viewpoints were legitimate, but, very different.

I would appreciate it if you backed off on the history of **The Sisterhood** in future issues, for a while. The past is more interesting once one has a basic grasp of the present. Besides, Mike and you may develop a more interesting history when you get some feedback. I like the sketch you have provided of **The Sisterhood's** origin. It was just the right amount of background to set the tone of the book. The format of presentation was excellent too. Finding out some of the past and some of the present in a back and forth pattern held my interest quite handily.

I'm glad you all demonstrated the thought you put into the book by providing the appendices, with how to pronounce the names, no less. Great! Want to take your hand at how to say Vishanti or Cyttorals?

I think I may have possibly said enough about the story line. I shall talk about some different things now.

The layout, art, and lettering meshed very well together. The book was easy to follow. One section flowed into the next. The lettering was superb. Vosburg's art expressed the characters emotions very well. However, I'm rather tired of big breasted female leads. I don't know if it's just easier to draw or what, but, I'd like to see less of that, in this book. I don't want to leave on a bad note so I'll say again Mike Vosburg did just fine.

The book smacks of a good team effort. I may be wrong, but it seems like several people pulled together to make **Sisterhood of Steel** work out. I applaud you all.

By the by, you have a good team of letterers in Orzechowski and Bulhalis.

I'm delighted Ms. Marx has her own book. I've seen her work or ideas in other books and have felt she could do well given some room.

More women in comics! Good luck to you all.

Dan Parry
Lacey, WA

Blockade is a serious threat. Ildana is not entirely self-supporting and must rely on some outside supplies, and it's the Matron's job to keep the seige supplies filled. Same with the weaponry: some is made there, some is imported.

Dear Christy and Cohorts,

I was expecting a hellofa lot less from this comic. Reading comics off and on for 20 years more or less you can smell a stinker a mile away. Milady, I personally think this one smells of roses.

But on to the comic you say.

1) You can make your point about feminism or whatever, but please don't beat us poor mules with your sticks. Marion Zimmer Bradley and her red sunned planet have tackled some of the problems. I'm waiting to see how you handle them.

A) regular women-to-swordswoman relationship.

B) Men-to-swordwomen relationship (the situation has got to be super tense. No man wants to see a woman best him at anything, especially physically, no matter how liberal they are, and the men in this world must be worse then us now).

2) What is the process of becoming one of the Sisters.

3) The relationships of sister-to-sister.

4) The Matrix 1st issue and this looks like this could be more important (ie; juicy) than all the rest of the relations of the book.

You've got the potential for a **Hill Street Blues** here to do the truly original. Mainly the interpersonal relationships that can be sunk into. Be what Conan could have been instead of "me-travel-me-see-monster-me-kill-monster." I'm strapped and ready to go where you take me.

Till the stories get predictable.

Bruce Harden
Waipahu, HI

We'll be touching on all these relationships and more. There are major shake-ups in the store for the Matrix and the Sisterhood, with Boronwë right in the thick of it!

*The mail response has been wonderful. Don't stop now! We have an insatiable appetite for feedback. Thanks to the readers who sent drawings! I'll publish more letters, fan art, personal responses, more of Mike's art, and background tidbits in my personal newsletter, **Scrolls of the Sisterhood**. Those interested in details should write to me at the following address: P.O. Box 894, Wrightwood, CA 92397.*

C.M.